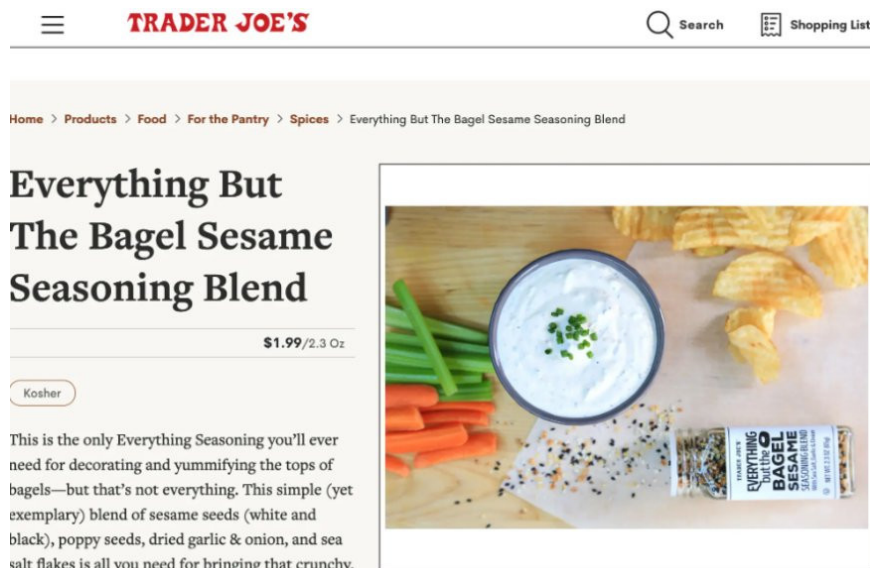




## Everything Bagel Seasoning Was Banned in South Korea



The Trader Joe's website promotes the product as “the only Everything Seasoning you'll ever need.” Credit...Trader Joe's

The seasoning is sold by Trader Joe's, a brand whose popularity has skyrocketed in the region in recent.

The seasoning garnishes everything from bagels and scrambled eggs to fried chicken in many countries. But in South Korea, it tops something else: a list of unexpected goods travelers are banned from bringing into the country.

Trader Joe's savory Everything but The Bagel seasoning mix has a cult following in the United States, but many who have tried to bring the topping into South Korea have had the garlic, onion and poppy seed blend — often described as “everything seasoning” — confiscated by authorities, local news reports said.

Food containing poppy seeds, “including popular bagel seasoning blends,” is considered contraband in South Korea, according to the U.S. Embassy, making the coveted topping a forbidden treat.

The Trader Joe's seasoning has been banned in South Korea since 2022, but the brand's popularity in the region has skyrocketed, with influencers in Japan sporting Trader Joe's canvas tote bags as a fashion statement.

As more travelers have tried to bring the popular seasoning mix into South Korea, local news and social media sites have reported in recent weeks on an increase in confiscations at airports.

Poppy seeds are not opiates but may be contaminated by the plant's fluid, which contains opiates, when they are harvested. The amount of contamination can vary, and thus the amount of opiates that end up on poppy seeds in bagels, cakes or seasonings is hard to pinpoint, researchers say.

In South Korea, poppy seeds are banned because they are considered a narcotic.

“You can fail a drug test by consuming poppy seed products,” said Michelle Carlin, an assistant professor of toxicology and forensic chemistry at Rutgers University who has studied poppy seeds. “It obviously depends on the amount of poppy seeds present, but there is much variation found in the opiate compounds in the poppy seeds.”

Growing location, sunlight and how hydrated the poppy plants are can affect the amount of opiate contamination on poppy seeds, Ms. Carlin added. Her research found that, though washing the poppy seeds can remove contamination, it is very difficult to tell if seeds were washed before being put in food products.

Still, the chance of a seasoning mix having enough opiates in it to result in a positive drug test is relatively low, Ms. Carlin said. “With those seasonings, people are not using a lot. And the seasonings have other things like garlic or salt,” she said.